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JEK'S NEWS FROM
Inside Washington

Intelligence Sources Say Yes

Did ABC News Harm Afghan Guerrillas?

While Max Hugel, the director of covert operations for the CIA, was being forced to resign his post because of allegations against him publicized by the Washington *Post*, a former *Post* reporter now with ABC News was taking credit for blowing the lid off one of those covert operations—U.S. aid to the Afghan freedom fighters.

Interestingly, the *Post* story that led to Hugel's resignation was co-authored by Bob Woodward, a member of the team that led the *Post*'s investigation into the Watergate scandal that brought down Richard Nixon. The other member of the team, Carl Bernstein, is at ABC News where he is trying to "expose" U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

Although there have been stories in the press suggesting that the U.S. is doing something to help the Afghan resistance, Bernstein reports in the latest issue of the liberal *New Republic* that the American role "is far more extensive" than those reports indicated.

Shortly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Bernstein reports, President Carter ordered a secret operation to help the freedom fighters. "The Reagan Administration has since reviewed the clandestine operation and ordered it expanded," he says, to the point that today "the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is coordinating a complex, far-flung program, involving five countries and more than $100 million, to provide the Afghan resistance with the weaponry of modern guerrilla warfare," including surface-to-air missiles.

"The result," he goes on to say, "is an emerging anti-Soviet alliance—the United States, China, Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia—that, in the judgment of American planners, is effectively countering the most blatant Soviet aggression of the postwar era."

Bernstein adds, "according to a secret White House report, at least 60 Russian helicopters have been shot down—many by surface-to-air missiles."

Although conservatives might view the Bernstein report as welcome news and a sign that the U.S. is finally getting tough with the Russians, intelligence sources contacted by HUMAN EVENTS say the article—an expanded version of a report broadcast by Bernstein on the ABC "20-20" program on June 18 — could actually damage national security, feed the fires of Soviet propaganda, and jeopardize the sending of arms to the freedom fighters.

Ironically, Bernstein, who wrote a 1977 story for the left-wing newspaper, *Rolling Stone*, attacking the CIA's use of journalists, claims that his Afghan report is based on interviews with "more than 30 senior officials of the Carter and Reagan administrations" from the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA.

However, Sen. Birch Bayh, the liberal former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is the only current or former government official identified and quoted in the piece. Bayh, who is prohibited by the Senate resolution that established the Intelligence Committee from disclosing secret information without the permission of the full committee, confirmed the existence of a covert operation to aid the resistance.

Bayh told ABC News: "The CIA recognized, as did other nations, that if we were going to be able to really get the tribesmen and the Afghan fighters the kind of assistance they need, we're going to have to give them certain kinds of weapons to protect themselves against the gunships."

In the *New Republic* article Bernstein says that Bayh also revealed that "The objective was to strike a balance. On the one hand we wanted the Soviets to pay a significant price. On the other hand we didn't want to raise the conflict to the level of conventional warfare...or provide so much assistance that the Soviets would pour more troops in."

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This is not the first time that Bayh has publicly discussed the matter of U.S. aid to the Afghan guerrillas. On Jan. 9, 1980—two weeks after the Soviet invasion—then-Sen. Bayh appeared on the NBC "Today" show and was asked if the U.S. was trying to help the Afghan resistance.

"I think I can say," he said, "that when a significant number of people in Afghanistan were determined to try to exert themselves and to try to have some say in what kind of government Afghanistan should have, and not have it imposed upon them by the Soviets, we did take certain steps to help them do what any group of citizens should be able to do in a country."

Intelligence experts such as Dr. Roy Godson, an associate professor of government at Georgetown University, believe that Bayh improperly disclosed or "leaked" secret information during that "Today" show appearance.

While testifying on the National Intelligence Act before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in March 1980, Godson was asked by Rep. Robert McClory (R.-Ill.) "if you have any information of leaks from the Congress with respect to covert actions...."

"I'm afraid I do actually have some information which came to my attention in the Communist press," Godson replied. "I see the Soviets [the TASS news agency] have picked up from the [Communist party newspaper] *Daily World* a leak by one of the congressional committees, which was somewhat disturbing to me."

Godson said the leak—about U.S. covert involvement in Afghanistan—was the statement made by Bayh on the 'Today' show."

However, in a telephone interview with HUMAN EVENTS, Bayh, who is now with a law firm in Washington, D.C., denied that he disclosed secret information or damaged national security.

"I think you have to be careful what you say," he told us, "but you people in the news business keep asking the questions and I think some of us have a responsibility to try to let the people know without exposing any secrets—and I think I did that."

Bayh added, "I find right now people talking about things that I've known for two or three years that I think are very dangerous, that shouldn't be talked about. But everybody has to make their own judgment about that."

ABC correspondent Bernstein said much the same thing. In a telephone interview with us, Bernstein claimed that he didn't reveal any of the "operational details" about the arms supply effort. "Since there is very little here that's not known to the Russians," he said, "I think you'd be making a grave mistake to say that this piece gives something away—because it doesn't."

In addition, Bernstein said, there's a "basic point" here—"without revealing the operational details, it ought to be known that we're doing it."

But an intelligence source told us that, assuming the story is true, important information has been disclosed. "The whole definition of covert action is that the hand of the government involved not be shown. That's why it's covert action and not overt action."

Bernstein himself says in his report that Pakistan agreed to go along with the operation only if certain conditions were met, including an agreement that "there could be no acknowledgement by the countries involved in the covert operation of their roles." So we asked Bernstein if Pakistan could not cite his report as evidence that the U.S. had broken its word. Although Bernstein said that he saw no reason to believe that Pakistan had accused the U.S. of breaking its promise, he acknowledged that "conceivably, sure [it could happen]."

Whether or not the story is true, one source told us, the Soviets can cite the Bernstein report as proof that the U.S. can't be trusted, that we can't keep a secret. The perception that the U.S. is an unreliable partner could jeopardize future operations, as well as the one reportedly now under way in Afghanistan.

And since the Soviets claim they are in Afghanistan to counter the "aggressive imperialist forces" of the U.S., China and Pakistan, reports like those of Bernstein can be used to justify this claim.

As one source told us, "because the Russians know something or claim they know something, and say it's true, that's one thing. For the Russians to be able to quote a U.S. senator or an American television program, whether the report is true or false, is another. It's extremely valuable for Soviet propaganda."

Ironically, Bernstein told us that he thinks helping the Afghan guerrillas is a "good thing." But knowledgeable experts and intelligence sources believe that his report may actually hinder efforts to help the freedom fighters.

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